

SINCE NOVEMBER 7TH ON

# HUNGER STRIKE



Since November 2018, thousands of Kurdish detainees in Turkish prisons have been on an indefinite hunger strike. They call for the lifting of the total isolation of Abdullah Öcalan, the symbol of a peaceful solution to the Kurdish question, and democracy and freedom in the Middle East and around the world.



# **Hunger strike for Abdullah Öcalan**

The Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan was deported to Turkey in 1999 as a result of an operation in which the United States, England, Israel, Germany, Russia and Greece actively participated. When Öcalan was taken to the Imrali prison island, among the people who received him was a woman who introduced herself as a representative of the Council of Europe. A high-ranking adviser to US President Clinton later confirmed that the operation had been carried out on the orders of Clinton.

Thus, Turkey, the US and the EU are responsible for detaining and imprisoning Abdullah Öcalan on Imrali Prison Island. Abdullah Öcalan is not just any prisoner, but the leader of Kurdish society. The policy he has developed out of prison has paved the way for a democratic and peaceful solution to the war between the Turkish state and the PKK. Between the years 2008 to 2011 and 2012 to 2015 there were direct talks between Öcalan and the Turkish state. Parallel to these talks on Imrali, the "Oslo talks" between Turkey and the Kurdish political movement were conducted under observation of some European states. At this stage, the military conflicts and the loss of life fell to a very low level.

The Erdogan government unilaterally terminated this process and returned to its policy of war. The first step was to increase repression against the Kurdish leader Öcalan. Family visits and lawyer meetings with Öcalan, who has been living in the one-person prison on Imrali for 20 years, have been banned.

The last conversation with his lawyers took place on July 27, 2011. His family's last visit was on September 11, 2016. Since then, there has been no information about the life, safety, health and isolation conditions in which he is being held. The severe torture against Öcalan and the prevention of his meetings with lawyers is an open breach of the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which was signed by Turkey in 1988. It is also an open break from the 1954 Convention signed by Turkey for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. The only body that can control and eliminate these injuries is the Council of Europe, of which Turkey is a member. The European Council established the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT).

The CPT is an institution that regularly visits facilities where people are deprived of their liberty to prevent torture, inhuman and degrading treatment before it happens. But the applications submitted to the CPT by the Öcalans family, lawyers and Kurdish institutions were fruitless. The EU, the Council of Europe and the CPT have made no attempt to prevent the severe torture and isolation against Öcalan.

The appeal of Öcalan's lawyer to end severe isolation and ill-treatment at the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) was dismissed after years. Faced with this dangerous silence, the Öcalans family, its lawyers, Kurdish parliamentarians and members of the Kurdish society in Kurdistan, Turkey and Europe are forced to start an indefinite hunger strike. Kurdish parliamentarians and more than ten thousand Kurdish political prisoners in Turkish prisons had started the hunger strike. As Kurds living in Europe, we can not accept this isolation, torture and bad treatment against our political representative Öcalan and we can not remain silent in the face of the hunger strike that has begun in our country.

We trust in their understanding of the problems of our society and trust that our democratic and peaceful action will contribute to breaking the isolation on Imrali.